

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 DEAE-00 CIAE-00 INR-10 IO-13

JUSE-00 NSAE-00 CTME-00 SNM-05 TRSE-00 USIA-06

NSC-05 OES-07 OMB-01 AGRE-00 SS-15 AID-05 EB-08

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FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8854

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MEXICO 04104

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: SNAR, MX

SUBJECT: NARCOTICS - PRECISELY LOCATING ILLICIT CROPS

1. SUMMARY: BEFORE PROCEEDING WITH MAPPING PROJECT, EMBASSY SUGGESTS WE CONSIDER ANOTHER APPROACH TO REPORTING LOCATION OF ILLICIT CROPS WHICH WOULD AT LEAST COMPLEMENT, AND POSSIBLY SUBSTITUTE FOR, USE OF MAPS. EMBASSY REQUESTS EARLY VISIT BY AN INDIVIDUAL FULLY QUALIFIED IN USE OF LORAN. END SUMMARY.

2. WE NOW HAVE UNDER CONSIDERATION TWO SEPARATE BUT RELATED PROJECTS TO ASSIST IN LOCATING ILLICIT CROPS WITH PRECISION. THE FIRST, A REMOTE SENSING SYSTEM NOW BEING CONSIDERED BY THE GOM AND WHICH WOULD COST UPWARDS OF 45 MILLION, WOULD PROVIDE COMPUTER-GENERATED "MAPS" SHOWING THE LOCATIONS OF CROPS, TOGETHER WITH A COMPUTER LISTING OF EACH FIELD, ITS ESTIMATED SIZE, AND ITS COORDINATES. THE SECOND PROJECT, ESTIMATED AT \$2 MILLION, WOULD SPEED UP THE PRODUCTION OF 1:50,000 MAPS. DATA GENERATED BY THE REMOTE SENSING SYSTEM WOULD BE TRANSFERRED TO THESE MAPS AND USED BY HELICOPTER TEAMS TO LOCATE THE FIELD AND SPRAY IT.

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3. BECAUSE WE ARE SO USED TO THINKING IN TERMS OF THE FORMER MULTISPECTRAL PHOTOGRAPHIC SYSTEM (MOPSS), IN WHICH SUSPECT FIELD LOCATIONS WERE TRANSFERRED FROM THE MOPSS VIEWER TO PHOTOMOSAICS, WE MAY BE CARRYING AN ARCHAIC PROCEDURE INTO THE NEW REMOTE SENSING SYSTEM, TOGETHER WITH ALL OF THE SHORTFALLS OF THE OLD PROCEDURE. THE MOPSS SYSTEM, AND THE NEW REMOTE SENSING SYSTEM IN

THE WAY IT IS NOW PERCEIVED INTRODUCED TWO TYPES OF ERROR: (A) IN TRANSFERRING A PARTICULAR FIELD LOCATION FROM THE MOPSS VIEWER OR A COMPUTER PRINTOUT, ITSELF A TIME-CONSUMING PROCESS, THE TECHNICIAN CAN POSITION THE FIELD ON THE WRONG SPOT ON THE MAP; AND (B) THE SUPPORT HELICOPTER PILOT MAY MISREAD THE MAP WHILE DIRECTING A SPRAY MISSION AND REPORT THAT HE IS OVER ONE LOCATION WHEN, IN FACT, HE MAY BE SEVERAL MILES AWAY.

4. IN THE NEW SYSTEM, ERRORS OF THE FIRST TYPE CAN BE MINIMIZED BY PRODUCING THE COMPUTER-GENERATED "MAPS" AT THE SAME SCALE AS THE MAPS PILOTS WILL USE, PERMITTING EASY TRANSFER OF FIELD LOCATIONS BY OVERLAYING THE MAPS. HOWEVER, ERRORS OF THE SECOND TYPE WOULD REMAIN POSSIBLE, AND IT IS QUITE LIKELY THAT A SPRAY TEAM COULD DESTROY ONE FIELD, BUT REPORT THAT IT DESTROYED ANOTHER BECAUSE IT MISREAD ITS POSITION. SUBSEQUENT VERIFICATION FLIGHTS WOULD HAVE TO EXPLAIN WHY A FIELD, REPORTED DESTROYED, WAS STILL ALIVE. (COMMENT: THE FREQUENT INCOMPATIBILITY OF DETECTION, SPRAY, AND VERIFICATION REPORTS HAS ALWAYS BEEN A PROBLEM WHOSE MAGNITUDE ESCAPES MEANINGFUL ESTIMATION. IT IS THIS UNKNOWN MARGIN OF ERROR THAT WE HAVE CONTINUALLY, AND UNSUCCESSFULLY, ATTEMPTED TO MINIMIZE.)

5. IF WE DROP THE MOPSS APPROACH, AND TURN FROM MAPS
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TO ELECTRONIC MEANS OF DETERMINING POSITION, GREATER PRECISION SHOULD BE POSSIBLE. SINCE THE REMOTE SENSING AIRCRAFT WILL CARRY A POSITION-REPORTING SYSTEM, WE SUGGEST THAT WE SERIOUSLY CONSIDER PUTTING SIMILAR POSITION-REPORTING SYSTEMS ON THE SUPPORT HELICOPTERS THAT ACCOMPANY THE SPRAY HELICOPTERS.

6. IF THIS APPROACH IS FEASIBLE, THE IMPORTANCE OF MAPS WOULD BE GREATLY REDUCED, PERMITTING US TO DEVELOP A MORE ACCURATE AND RELIABLE SYSTEM AT A COST WHICH MAY EVEN BE LESS THAN WHAT WE INTENDED TO COMMIT TO MAP PRODUCTION. SPRAY FLEETS, INSTEAD OF CARRYING MAPS TO WHICH FIELD LOCATIONS HAD BEEN TRANSFERRED, WOULD CARRY ONLY THE COMPUTER PRINTOUT OF FIELD COORDINATES. THE SUPPORT SHIP, USING A PRECISION POSITION-REPORTING SYSTEM, WOULD NAVIGATE FROM ONE SET OF COORDINATES TO ANOTHER AND, IF THE SYSTEM WERE ACCURATE ENOUGH, THERE COULD BE NO DOUBT ABOUT THE ACCURACY OF SPRAY REPORTS.

7. WE DO NOT HAVE SUFFICIENT EXPERTISE TO RECOMMEND A POSITION-REPORTING SYSTEM FOR THIS PURPOSE, BUT OUR TECHNICAL ADVISERS ARE FAMILIAR WITH THREE SUCH SYSTEMS

(LORAN-C, GLOBAL NAVIGATION, AND ONTRAC III). THEIR INDUSTRY CONTACTS HAVE TOLD THEM THAT, OF THE THREE, LORAN-C IS THE MOST COST-EFFECTIVE IN THE TYPE APPLICATION WE HAVE TO CONSIDER, AND THAT IN MOUNTAINOUS TERRAIN LORAN-C CAN BE EXPECTED TO PRODUCE ACCURACY WHICH IS CONSISTENTLY WITHIN SEVERAL HUNDRED FEET. LORAN-C DOES NOT REQUIRE PERIODIC UPDATING BY GROUND REFERENCE, A FURTHER ADVANTAGE GRANTED THE LACK OF ADEQUATE MAPS.

8. EXPERIENCE IN RECENT YEARS SUGGESTS THAT A

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 MEXICO 04104

PRECISION REPORTING SYSTEM, IF ADOPTED, WOULD GREATLY FACILITATE OTHER ASPECTS OF FIELD OPERATIONS, INCLUDING SEARCH AND RECOVERY OF DOWNED AIRCRAFT, EXPEDITIOUS RESPONSE BY REINFORCEMENTS TO COUNTER HOSTILE ACTIONS, LOCATION OF GROUND TARGETS FOR ENFORCEMENT ACTIONS, AND MORE EFFECTIVE SUPPORT OF MILITARY FORCES INVOLVED IN GROUND OPERATIONS.

9. ACTION REQUESTED: IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS WE MUST DECIDE WHETHER TO PROCEED WITH THE MAPPING PROJECT. BEFORE DOING SO, WE SHOULD DETERMINE IF THE ABOVE SUGGESTED SYSTEM IS FEASIBLE, WHAT IT WOULD COST, AND WHETHER IT WOULD COMPLEMENT OR SUBSTITUTE FOR THE 1:50,000 MAPS. OUR FORMER AVIATION ADVISER, JOHN FORD, HAD EXTENSIVE EXPERIENCE WITH LORAN APPLICATIONS IN THE MOUNTAINOUS ENVIRONMENT OF SOUTHEAST ASIA AND IS FULLY FAMILIAR WITH THE OPERATION IN MEXICO. WE SUGGEST THAT HE, OR SOMEONE EQUALLY QUALIFIED, BE SENT TO MEXICO SOONEST. LUCEY

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